Montana Statewide
Dropout and Graduate Report

2008-09 School Year

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Montana Office of Public Instruction
Denise Juneau, Superintendent

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (AEE), nationally one-third of students, 1.3 million each year, fail to graduate. The AEE suggests that these low rates have for too long been "obscured ... by inadequate accountability systems at state and federal levels."

Montana's accountability system is a case in point. Dependent on reporting by each school and lacking an ability to account for all students statewide, Montana's dropout and graduation rates were often incomplete and inaccurate.

The advent of a statewide student information system using data verified and cleansed at the state and local levels has brought about a change in the accuracy and reliability of Montana's dropout data. This report reflects the second year of collecting and verifying data using AIM(Achievement in Montana).

Data from last year's 2007-2008 dropout report showed a sharp increase of dropout rates. Completion rates declined slightly but increased for American Indian students. What would the second year hold?

In this report for 2008 -2009, the number of dropouts decreased slightly for all students and the dropout rate stayed the same relative to last year. Dropout rates also stayed the same, with a slight increase in raw numbers, for grades 7 and 8 students. The high school dropout rate decreased by 0.1 percent from last year. More males than females dropped out and the grade12 continues to have the highest dropout rates.

The gap between male and female dropout rates is widening with a gap of 0.5 percent last year and a gap of 0.7 percent this year.

American Indian students experienced an increase in their dropout rates. In particular, the dropout rate for American Indian student females increased sharply from last year, an increase of 1.2 percentage points for high school students. American Indian students experience the highest dropout rates in the 9th grade and drop out more often in the state's largest schools than at smaller schools on or near a reservation.

White students decreased their dropout numbers and rate from last year; however, they now make up a larger share of the grades 7 and 8 dropouts than ever before.

For school year 2008-09, the calculation of the completion and graduation rate includes two years of student-level data from AIM. Rates for all student groups decreased compared to 2007-08 data. The completion rate for the Class of 2008 was 84.2 percent compared to a rate of 81.9 percent for the Class of 2009. The graduation rate was 82.6 percent for the Class of 2008 compared to a rate of 80.7 percent for the Class of 2009.

1. *Completers* are the count of individuals who completed the high school graduation requirements of a school district, including early graduates, during the previous school year, or completed the high school graduation requirements of a school district at the end of summer prior to the current school year.

2. *Graduate* is an individual who completes a district's graduation requirements in four years or less from the time an individual enrolled in grade 9, or has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) allowing for more than four years to graduate.

Introduction

This report provides information on students who graduated or dropped out of Montana public, state-funded and nonpublic accredited schools during the 2008-09 school year. Increasing dropout rates and decreasing completion and graduation rates have spurred much research into this subject in Montana and nationwide. The reports mentioned below are representative of the research, but are far from the only organizations doing research in this field.

The Impact of Dropping Out of School

Consequences of dropping out include increased chances of being in poverty, being unemployed, being on public assistance, being in prison, being divorced, or being a single parent according to a 2006 study funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation called "The Silent Epidemic, Perspectives of High School Dropouts." On average, high school dropouts earn $9,200 less per year than high school graduates, and about $1 million less over a lifetime than college graduates. Dropouts were three times more likely than college graduates to be unemployed in 2004, 40 percent of dropouts receive some type of government assistance, and dropouts are eight times more likely to be in jail or prison than a high school graduate. If a dropout resorts to a life of crime and drugs, the lifetime cost to the nation is between $1.7 and $2.3 million.

According to the Alliance for Excellent Education the lost lifetime earnings in Montana from dropouts this year alone total nearly $830 million. Montana would save more than $29.8 million in health care costs over the lifetime of each class of dropouts. The economy of Montana would see a combination of crime-related savings and additional revenue of about $19.6 million each year if the male high school graduation rate would increase by just 5 percent.

Why Students Drop Out

There is no formula to foretell who is at risk of dropping out. In 'The Silent Epidemic, Perspectives of High School Dropouts," young people who left high school without graduating indicated the top five reasons for dropping out were: classes were not interesting, the student missed too many days and could not catch up, bad influences (hanging out with the wrong crowd), too much freedom (both from parents and schools), and failing grades.

In the survey of high school dropouts contained within " The Silent Epidemic, Perspectives of High School Dropouts," 88 percent had passing grades with 62 percent having "C's and above"; 58 percent dropped out with two years or less to complete high school (58 percent of Montana's dropouts were in grades 11 or 12); 81percent recognized that graduating from high school was vital to their success; and 74 percent would have stayed in school if they had to do it over again. In the same survey, 80 percent of the students who dropped out did less than an hour of homework each day in high school.

Graduate and Dropout Definitions and Data Collections

Traditionally, each fall, schools report graduate data for all high schools and dropout data for grades 7 through 12 by gender and race/ethnicity categories for the previous school year. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) greatly increased accountability for student academic achievement for all public

schools. The determination of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under NCLB requires that public high and 7-8 schools report dropout and graduate data not only by gender and race/ethnicity, but also by the following student populations: economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, limited English proficient, and migrant. In addition, public high schools must also report graduate data by whether students graduated "in the standard number of years" (i.e., "on-time").

Graduate Definitions and Data Collection

Montana accredited high schools report graduate numbers to the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) each fall for the previous school year using the definition in the box to the right.

Dropout Definitions and Data Collection

Dropout rates can be calculated and reported in three different ways: 1) event rates (snapshot of those who drop out in a single year); 2) status rates (proportion of the population who have not completed school and are not enrolled); and 3) cohort rates (a more comprehensive picture which follows a sample group of students over time and generalizes their rate to a larger group). The collection method used in this report is an event rate adapted from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) at the U.S. Department of Education and is consistent with the requirements of the NCES Common Core of Data (CCD) reporting.

Data Limitations

Because the number of students in racial minority groups and enrolled in small schools are relatively low, small annual changes in data can cause wide variations in annual completion, graduation, and dropout rates. For example, in a class with 10 students, one dropout would translate to a 10 percent dropout rate. A more realistic indicator for small schools and racial minority groups is an average of several years. Montana has developed a student information system and is now able to track students across schools and school years.

Graduates are the count of individuals who:
1. completed the high school graduation requirements of a school district, including early graduates, during the previous school year, or
2. completed the high school graduation requirements of a school district at the end of summer prior to the current school year.

General Education Development Test (GED) recipients are not counted as graduates.

Standard Number of Years (i.e., "On-time") Graduate is an individual who:
1. completes a district's graduation requirements in four years or less from the time an individual enrolled in grade 9, or
2. has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) allowing for more than four years to graduate.

Dropouts are the count of individuals who:
1. were enrolled in school on the date of the previous year 's October enrollment count or at some time during the previous school year and were not enrolled on the date of the current school year October count; or
2. were not enrolled at the beginning of the previous school year but were expected to enroll and did not re-enroll during the year ("no show") and were not enrolled on the date of the current school year October count; and
3. have not graduated from high school or completed a state or district-approved high school educational program; and
4. have not transferred to another school, been temporarily absent due to a school-recognized illness or suspension, or died.

Beginning in School Year 2006-07, the process for counting dropouts became more precise by putting into effect Montana's statewide student information system AIM (Achievement in Montana). The use of the AIM system reduced differences in educator interpretations of the dropout definition. The AIM documents student migration into and out of the PK-12 education system. Data about student migrations are used by AIM to determine if a student is a dropout. In AIM, dropout counts are based primarily on AIM enrollment records and AIM end status, which is a code each student receives upon leaving a school. The 2007-08 school year dropout and graduation numbers were the first to go through a thorough quality assurance process, which included sending the complete dropout and completion numbers to the school for signature confirming dropout and completion numbers.

Analysis of Montana's Dropout Rate

Calculating a Dropout Rate

Dropout rates are calculated by dividing the number of dropouts by the October enrollment total. Dropout rates vary for different student groups (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender). Calculating and analyzing dropout rates are key to determining if certain groups of students are more likely to dropout and can be used in developing and targeting dropout prevention efforts.

Dropout Rate Formula
Dropout Rate = Number of dropouts/October enrollment X 100.
Example:
The 2008-09 Dropout Rate for Montana Accredited Schools =
2,423 Dropouts for grades 7 through 12, divided by 68,000 students enrolled in October 2008, multiplied by 100 = 3.6%.

The Montana Office of Public Instruction has implemented a Student Records Confidentiality Policy that prohibits the release of data for student counts under ten. This includes racial/ethnic, dropout, and completer and graduate student groups. Counts under ten will be indicated by the "NA" symbol in all of the applicable tables in this document.

## School Year 2008-09 Montana Statewide Dropout Rate Summary

- Montana public and private accredited schools reported that 2,423 students dropped out of grades 7 through 12 during the 2008-09 school year. The corresponding October enrollment was 68,000, yielding a dropout rate of 3.6 percent for the 2008-09 school year (see Table 1 on following page). The 2008-09 dropout rate for Montana, grades 7 and 8, was 0.3 percent, but represented 70 students leaving school. The 2008-09 dropout rate for Montana high schools was 5.1 percent.

- Overall dropouts decreased from the previous year. This was the second year of increased accountability in the student information system (AIM) and quality control procedures. Peak dropout rates have traditionally been observed in the 10th grade, when many students turn 16 and students can legally exit the school system. For the 2008-09 school year, however, peak dropout rates were observed in grade 12. Section 20-5-102 (1) Montana Code Annotated states: Except as provided in [Montana Code Annotated §20-5-102(2)], any parent, guardian, or other person who is responsible for the care of any child who is 7 years of age or older prior to the first day of school in any school fiscal year shall cause the child to be instructed in the program prescribed by the board of public education pursuant to 20-7-111 until the later of the following dates: (a) the child's 16th birthday; (b) the date of completion of the work grade 8.

- For the 2008-09 school year, American Indian students represented 10.5 percent of the total school enrollment for grades 7 through 12, but account for 25.8 percent of the total dropouts. The 2008-09 American Indian dropout rate for Montana grades 7 and 8 was 1.1 percent (Appendix, Table 1). The 2008-09 American Indian dropout rate for Montana high schools was 12.7 percent (Appendix, Table 1).
- The overall total American Indian dropout rate increased by 0.8 percentage points, while the dropout rate went down 0.2 percentage points for White students from the 2007-08 school year.
- Montana's dropout rates have increased from 2004-05 through 2007-08 then decreased slightly in 2008-09 (see Figure 1 on following page).

Table 1

2008-09 Montana Dropout Rate Summary

	Dropout Rates	Dropout Count	Enrollment
Overall Total (Grades 7-12)	3.6%	2,423	68,000
HS Total	5.1%	2,353	46,241
Gr 12	6.5%	711	10,920
Gr 11	5.9%	671	11,460
Gr 10	5.0%	587	11,649
Gr 9	3.1%	384	12,212
7 & 8 Total	0.3%	70	21,759
Gr 8	0.3%	37	10,905
Gr 7	0.3%	33	10,854
Gender			
Male	3.9%	1,369	35,004
Female	3.2%	1,054	32,996
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian	8.8%	624	7,130
Asian	2.7%	19	700
Hispanic	5.5%	93	1,678
Black	4.7%	27	569
Pacific Islander	1.7%	NA	175
White	2.9%	1,657	57,748

Figure 1: Montana Dropout Rates - 2004-05 to 2008-09
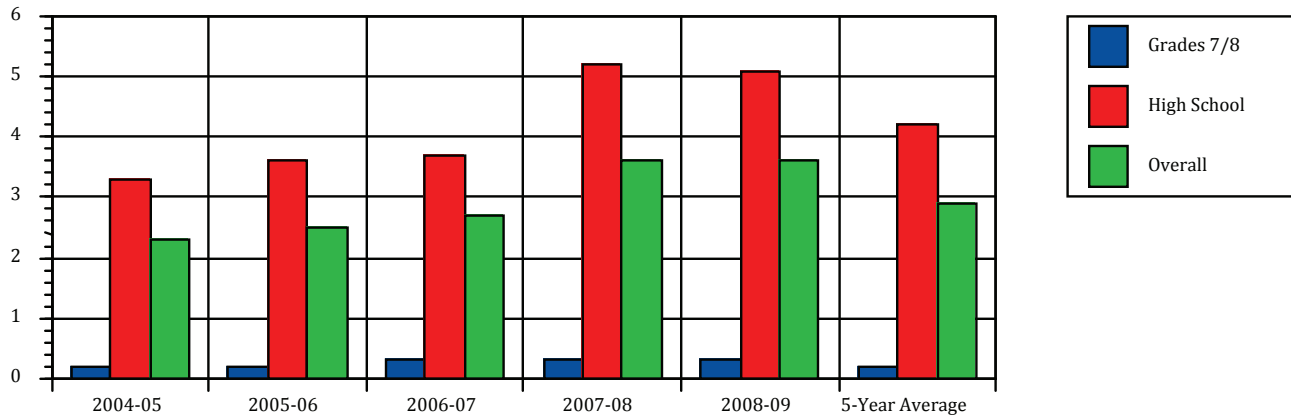
Dropout Rates for Different Student Groups

Since dropout rates can vary greatly among certain student populations, calculating and analyzing disaggregated dropout rates are key in developing and targeting dropout prevention strategies. The data collected by the OPI allows for analysis of dropout rates by grade, gender, race/ethnicity, and various types of schools.

Dropout Rates by Gender

In Montana schools, more males than females are enrolled at every grade level. For the 2008-09 school year, about 51 percent of the total school enrollment for grades 7 through 12 was male and 49 percent was female. Males have traditionally had higher dropout rates than females for most grade levels. Consistent with previous years, the 2008-09 dropout rate for grades 9 through 12 for males (5.6 percent) was greater than for females (4.6 percent). Dropout rates for males increased or stayed the same for all grades except grade 9. For females, the dropout rates decreased or stayed the same for all grades except for grades 9 and 12. The biggest change was observed for grade 11 females whose rate declined from 5.8 percent to 5.3 percent. For details of the 2008-2009 dropout rate by gender and grade level, see Table 2 below.

Table 2 2008-09 Montana Dropout Rates by Grade and Gender								
	Dropout Rates			**Dropout Count**			**Enrollment**		
Grade	Male	Female	Statewide	Male	Female	Statewide	Male	Female	Statewide
HS Total	5.6%	4.6%	5.1%	1,323	1,030	2,353	23,795	22,446	46,241
Grade 12	7.2%	5.8%	6.5%	399	312	711	5,572	5,348	10,920
Grade 11	6.4%	5.3%	5.9%	376	295	671	5,863	5,597	11,460
Grade 10	5.5%	4.5%	5.0%	329	258	587	5,976	5,673	11,649
Grade 9	3.4%	2.8%	3.1%	219	165	384	6,384	5,828	12,212
7 & 8 Total	0.4%	0.2%	0.3%	46	24	70	11,209	10,550	21,759
Grade 8	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	23	14	37	5,607	5,298	10,905
Grade 7	0.4%	0.2%	0.3%	23	10	33	5,602	5,252	10,854
Overall Total	3.9%	3.2%	3.6%	1,369	1,054	2,423	35,004	32,996	68,000

An analysis of the dropout rates by gender for the past five years indicates that females drop out at a lower rate at every grade level than males except for grade 8 where the rates are the same. Peak dropout rates for females are observed grades 11 and 12. Dropout rates for males increase steadily through grade 12. The-five year trend indicates that the gap between males and females is widening, (see Table 3 on the next page).

Table 3
Montana Dropout Rates by Grade Level and Gender for Five Years

	Dropout Rates						Dropout Count					
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	5-yr Avg	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	5-yr Total
7 & 8 Total	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	37	48	62	65	70	282
Male	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%	21	29	30	32	46	158
Female	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	16	19	32	33	24	124
HS Total	3.3%	3.6%	3.7%	5.2%	5.1%	4.2%	1,653	1,776	1,834	2,475	2,353	10,091
Male	3.6%	3.9%	4.2%	5.5%	5.6%	4.5%	919	984	1,059	1,360	1,323	5,645
Female	3.1%	3.3%	3.2%	4.8%	4.6%	3.8%	734	792	775	1,115	1,030	4,446
Overall Total	2.3%	2.5%	2.7%	3.6%	3.6%	2.9%	1,690	1,824	1,896	2,540	2,423	10,373
Male	2.5%	2.7%	3.0%	3.9%	3.9%	3.2%	940	1,013	1,089	1,392	1,369	5,803
Female	2.1%	2.3%	2.3%	3.4%	3.2%	2.6%	750	811	807	1,148	1,054	4,570

Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity Categories

Dropout rates vary by race/ethnicity categories. For the 2008-09 school year, Montana school enrollment for grades 7 through 12 included 84.9 percent White students, 10.5 percent American Indians, 1.0 percent Asians, 2.5 percent Hispanics, 0.8 percent Blacks, and 0.3 percent Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders. Because the enrollment of some minority groups is low, annual dropout rates for these groups may vary widely from year to year. Averages of a period of years are more realistic indicators of the dropout rates.

The 2008-09 school year dropout rate for the American Indian students was greater than the statewide average of White students (see Table 1, in the Appendix). For the 2008-09 school year, the combined race/ethnicity categories of Asian, Hispanic, Black, and Pacific Islander yielded a dropout rate of 4.5 percent. Because the number of students enrolled for these race/ethnicity categories is low, annual dropout rates often vary widely from year to year. An average dropout rate using dropout and enrollment data from multiple years is a more accurate indicator for these small groups (see Table 4 below).

Table 4
2008-09 Montana Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity Categories

|	Dropout Rates			Dropout Count			Enrollment		
	Grades 7-8	Grades 9-12	Total	Grades 7-8	Grades 9-12	Total	Grades 7-8	Grades 9-12	Total
American Indian	1.1%	12.7%	8.8%	26	598	624	2,409	4,721	7,130
Asian	0.4%	3.9%	2.7%	1	18	19	238	462	700
Hispanic	0.8%	8.1%	5.5%	5	88	93	596	1,082	1,678
Black	0.0%	7.3%	4.7%	0	27	27	198	371	569
Pacific Islander	0.0%	2.5%	1.7%	0	3	3	55	120	175
White	0.2%	4.1%	2.9%	38	1,619	1,657	18,263	39,485	57,748
Overall	0.3%	5.1%	3.6%	70	2,353	2,423	21,759	46,241	68,000

A Closer Look at American Indian Dropout Rates

On average, American Indian students drop out of grades 7 and 8 at a rate 12 times that of White students and out of high school at a rate more than 2.5 times that of White students.

In the past five years, American Indian students represented 11.3 percent of the total school enrollment for grades 7 through 8, but accounted for 53.5 percent of the dropouts. That five-year figure was 63.5 percent just last year and 71.9 percent in the 2005-06 report. For grades 9 through 12, American Indian students represented 10.4 percent of the total school enrollment and 23.7 percent of the dropouts.

For the 2008-09 school year, American Indian dropout rates decreased at the 7-8 level by 0.2 percentage points and increased at the high school level by 1.2 percentage points. That is an increase of 5.5 percentage points in the last two years. White dropout rates stayed the same at the 7-8 level for the third year in a row and decreased at the 9-12 level during the 2008-09 school year. However, the five year average went up for White students in grades 9-12 from 3.2 percent to 3.5 percent (see Figure 2 below and Figures 4 and 5 in the Appendix). There has been improved dropout data collection procedures using AIM and increased emphasis placed on dropout data with regard to federal accountability requirements for public high schools.

Figure 2: Montana Dropout Rates - 2004-05 to 2008-09
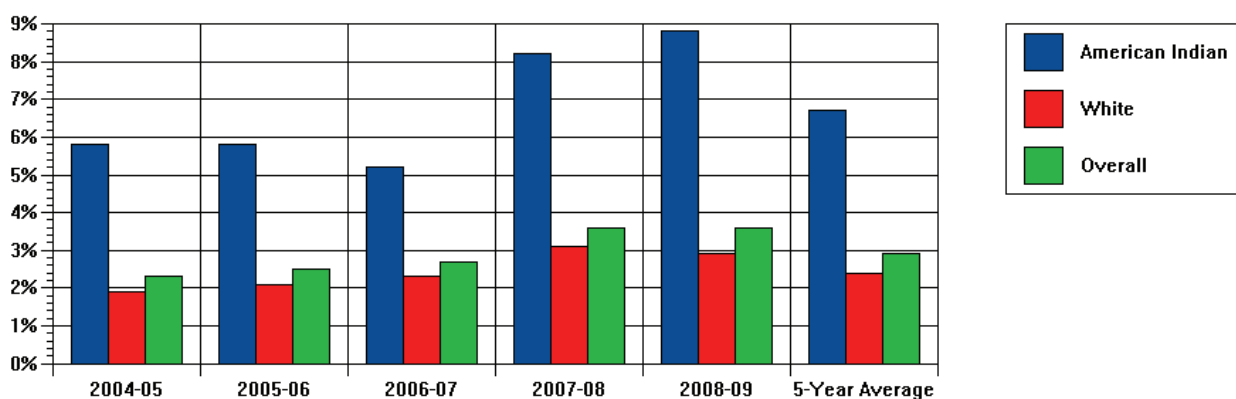
White students drop out at a much lower rate at every grade level than American Indian students. Peak dropout rates for Whites are observed around grade 12, whereas, dropout rates for American Indian students peak a year earlier in grade 11. The highest number of American Indians drop out in grade 9 and Whites in grade 12. In grades 11 and 12, the American Indian dropout rate is more than double the rate of Whites. The American Indian dropout rate is 4.8 times higher among grade 9 students than for White students.

Although, in general, males drop out of school at a higher rate than females, this gender difference is not observed for the American Indian populations on a year-by-year basis. As illustrated in Figures 7 and 8 in the Appendix, for the past five years, American Indian females have dropped out at a higher rate in two out of the five years at both grades 7 and 8 and grades 9 through12 . For grades 7-8, 2008-09 represents the widest gap between males (1.5 percent) and females (0.7 percent) over the past five years. At the high school level in 2008-09 the female rate increased 1.3 percentage points while the male rate only increased 0.5 percentage points over 2007-08 and now, the American Indian female dropout rate is 0.7 percentage points higher than the American Indian male student's dropout rate.

The dropout rates for high school American Indian females showed a sharp increase in school year 2008-09, while American Indian males continued to increase, albeit slower. For White students, males increased numerically and percentage wise in grades 7-8 and increased percentage wise at the high school level. Female students stayed the same percentage and numerically at the grades 7-8 level and decreased both numerically and percentage wise at the high school level.

Dropout Rate by Size of District

For the purpose of comparing similarly sized school districts, Montana districts have been identified by size categories based on enrollment numbers.

Category - Elementary Enrollment	**Category -High School Enrollment**	**Category - K-12 Districts**
1E= more than 2,500 students	1H= more than 1,250 students	1K= 400 or more students
2E= 851 to 2,500 students	2H= 401 to 1,250 students	2K= 399 or fewer students
3E= 401 to 850 students	3H= 201 to 400 students	
4E= 151 to 400 students	4H= 76 to 200 students	
5E= 41 to 150 students	H= 75 or fewer students	
6E= 40 or fewer students		

The highest dropout rates for grades 7 through 8 are observed for 3E, districts with enrollments between 401 and 850 students. As illustrated in Table 5 on the following page, on average at the high school level, smaller school districts generally have lower dropout rates than larger districts. The highest dropout rates in school year 2008-09 were observed for 2H districts (401 to 1,250 students).

American Indian dropout rates at the high school level (see Figure 10 in the Appendix) are highest at 1H districts (more than 1,250 students). The American Indian dropout rate is lowest for 1K (400 or more students) districts at 4.3 percent.

- Over the last five years, increased dropout rates for American Indian students were observed for all high school size categories except for 1K which dropped from 4.3 percent to 3.5 percent.

- For the past five years, 1H districts had the highest dropout rate for American Indian students at 12.9 percent, but American Indian students make up 5.2 percent of the 1H enrollment. American Indian students have a dropout rate for 1H districts that is more than three times higher than the rate for White students in 1H districts and is 4.3 percentage points higher than American Indian dropout rate for 2H districts.

- The highest percentage of American Indian students enrolled is in 4H districts at 21.0 percent. The lowest percentage of American Indian students enrolled is in 1K at 4.6 percent.

- American Indian students are one of the more transient student groups. The implementation of AIM has greatly affected knowing whether and where they are enrolled.

- At the high school level, the number of dropouts increased for every size category except for students in the 1K category, which reported a five-year average of 3.0 percent in the previous year compared to a five year average of 2.9 percent in the 2008-09 school year.

- For White students, the high school dropout rate has increased in the 2008-09 school year for every size category except 5H (75 or fewer students) which stayed the same at 1.1 percent and 1K which decreased to 2.9 percent from 3.0 percent.

Table 5
Montana Dropout Rate by School District Size

	1E,1H	2E,2H	3E,3H	4E,4H	5E,5H	6E	1K	2K	All Schools
Level									
7/8 dropouts									
2008-09 rate	0.3%	0.1%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.7%	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%
2007-08 rate	0.1%	0.5%	0.6%	0.5%	0.3%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%
2006-07 rate	0.1%	0.2%	0.8%	0.2%	0.2%	0.8%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%
2005-06 rate	0.1%	0.5%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%
2004-05 rate	0.1%	0.1%	0.5%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%
5-yr average rate	0.2%	0.3%	0.5%	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%
HS dropouts									
2008-09 rate	5.5%	5.7%	4.5%	4.1%	3.2%	NA	2.9%	3.4%	4.9%
2007-08 rate	5.7%	5.5%	3.7%	5.1%	3.0%	NA	3.9%	2.6%	5.1%
2006-07 rate	4.5%	4.4%	3.6%	2.2%	1.9%	NA	2.2%	2.0%	3.7%
2005-06 rate	4.4%	4.3%	2.9%	2.4%	0.7%	NA	2.4%	1.9%	3.6%
2004-05 rate	3.4%	4.6%	3.5%	2.7%	0.7%	NA	3.1%	1.7%	3.3%
5-yr average rate	4.7%	4.9%	3.7%	3.3%	1.9%	NA	2.9%	2.3%	4.1%

The Completion and Graduation Rate

The dropout rates identified thus far in this report are annual snapshots of grade-by-grade dropouts. The dropout data used to calculate those annual rates can be used in conjunction with graduate data to build a high school completion rate or "on-time" graduation rate for a specific class of students.

The Completion Rate

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) developed a completion rate using an estimated cohort method, which utilizes both dropout and graduate data and can be calculated for all accredited schools, but requires data from four consecutive years.

Completion Rate Formula
Completion Rate = $c_t/(c_t + d12_t + d11_{(t-1)} + d10_{(t-2)} + d9_{(t-3)})$.

Where:
c= number of graduates receiving a high school diploma in 4 years + nonstandard graduates
t= year of graduation
d= dropouts
12, 11, 10, 9 = class level

Example:
The 2008-09 Completion Rate for Montana High Schools =
10,284 graduates for Class of 2009 divided by (2,269 students dropped out over four years plus 10,284 Graduates for the Class of 2009) multiplied by 100 = 81.9%.

The overall completion rate for the Class of 2009 was 81.9 percent. For the Class of 2009, females had a higher completion rate (83.3 percent) than males (80.6 percent). The race/ethnicity categories of Asian, Hispanic, Black, and Pacific Islander accounted for only 3.6 percent of the 2008-09 graduates and 5.2 percent of the dropouts over four years. Therefore, as with dropout rates, the completion rates for these race/ethnicity categories tend to vary widely from year to year. The Class of 2009 completion rate for the American Indian race/ethnicity category was considerably lower than the statewide completion rate and that of the White category. As illustrated below in Table 6 and Figure 3, American Indian students had a three-year average completion rate of 65.8 percent, lower than the White average of 86.4 percent. Decreased completion rates were observed for All, White, and American Indian students for the 2008-09 school year.

Table 6

School Year 2008-09 Montana Completion Rate Summary

	Dropouts					Completers 2008-09	Completion Rate
	Grade 9 2005-06	Grade 10 2006-07	Grade 11 2007-08	Grade 12 2008-09	4-yr Dropout Total		
Overall Total	392	459	707	711	2,269	10,284	81.9%
Gender							
Male	203	268	378	399	1,248	5,198	80.6%
Female	189	191	329	312	1,021	5,086	83.3%
Race/Ethnicity							
American Indian	144	83	140	142	509	922	64.4%
Asian	NA	NA	NA	NA	17	94	84.7%
Hispanic	18	20	17	18	73	192	72.5%
Black	NA	NA	NA	12	25	66	72.5%
Pacific Islander	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	18	90.0%
White	227	350	536	530	1,643	8,992	84.6%

Figure 3: Completion Rates
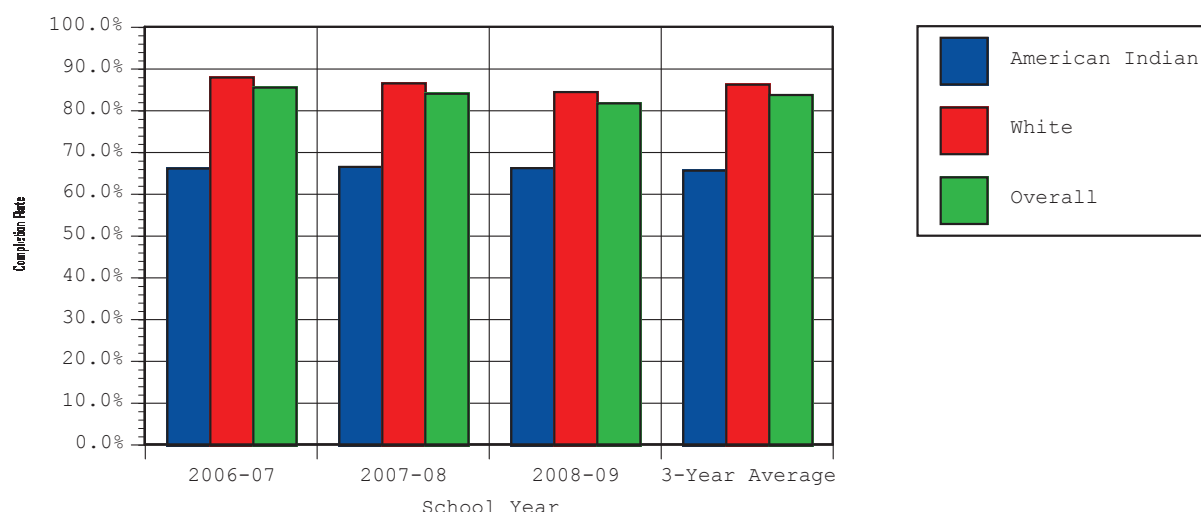
The Adequate Yearly Progress Graduation Rate

Graduation rate, defined as "the percentage of students who graduate from secondary school with a regular diploma in the standard number of years" (i.e., "on-time"), is the required additional indicator for public high schools in AYP determinations. Montana's high school graduation rate (U.S. Department of Education-approved) is an estimated cohort group rate based on the method recommended by the NCES. Public high schools must have a graduation rate for the "All Students Combined" subgroup of at least 80 percent or make improvement toward this goal to meet this indicator. Montana's graduation rate is calculated using the formula in the box to the right. Montana's student information system (AIM) will assign each student a cohort when they start grade 9 and they will not be allowed to change cohorts.

The Class of 2009 AYP Graduation Rate for "All Students Combined" was 80.7 percent (see Table 7 and Figure 4 on following page).

Disaggregated graduation rates are not used for determinations on this indicator; however, for the Class of 2009, the American Indian graduation rate was considerably lower than any of the student groups. Although graduate and dropout data for the 2008-09 school year has been collected by the OPI, individual school and district AYP determinations, which use these data for the 2009-10 school year, will not be made until July 2010.

AYP Graduation Rate Formula

Graduation Rate = gt /(ct + gt + d12t + d11(t-1) + d10(t-2) + d9(t-3)).

Where:

g= number of graduates receiving a standard high school diploma in four years or less (from the time enrolled in the 9th grade) or had an IEP allowing for more than four years to graduate.

c= completers of high school by other means

t= year of graduation

d= dropouts

12, 11, 10, 9 = class level

Example:

The 2008-09 Graduation Rate for Montana Public High Schools =

9,905 "On-time" Graduates for Class of 2009 divided by (2,243) students dropped out over four years plus 124 Not "On-time" Graduates for the Class of 2009 plus 9,905 "On-time" Graduates for the Class of 2009) multiplied by 100 = 80.7 %.

Table 7

Montana Public High School AYP Graduation Rate for the Class of 2009

| Subgroups | Dropouts | | | | | Graduates 2008-09 | | AYP Graduation Rate |
	Grade 9 2005-06	Grade 10 2006-07	Grade 11 2007-08	Grade 12 2008-09	4-yr Dropout Total	Not On-time	On-time	
All Students Combined	390	459	699	695	2,243	124	9,905	80.7%
American Indian	143	83	133	138	497	36	827	60.8%
Asian	NA	NA	NA	NA	17	NA	91	84.2%
Hispanic	18	20	17	18	73	NA	182	70.5%
Black	NA	NA	NA	12	25	NA	65	72.2%
Pacific Islander	NA	NA	NA	NA	2	NA	17	89.5%
White	226	350	535	518	1,629	85	8,723	83.6%

Figure 4: Montana Public High School AYP Graduation Rates for All Students Combined and Race/Ethnicity (School Year 2008-09)
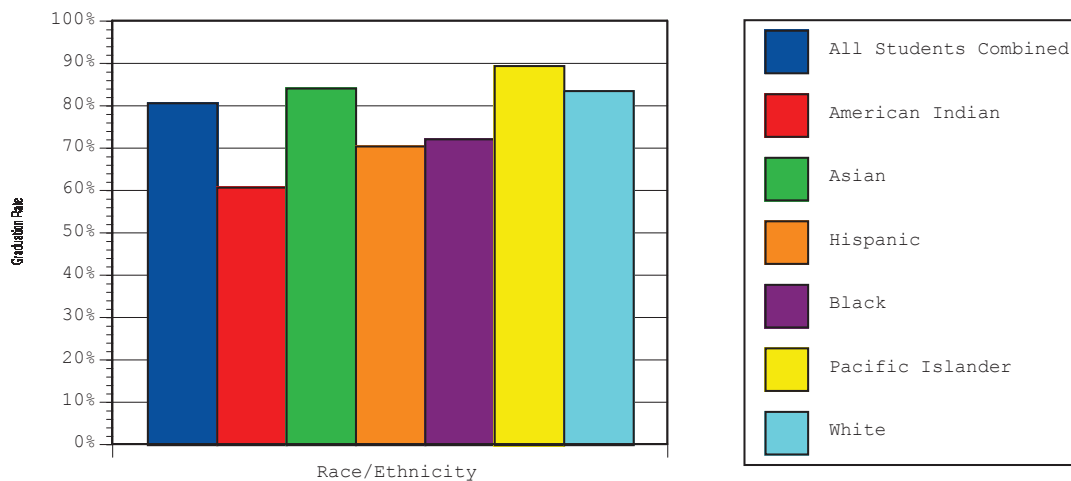
What Helps Prevent Students from Dropping Out?

At the conclusion of "The Silent Epidemic, Perspectives of High School Dropouts," the authors devised a 10-point plan to reduce the number of dropouts in America. These 10 points are similar to the findings of other groups working to reduce dropout rates and increase high school completion rates:

1. Support methods that collect and disseminate accurate dropout and graduation data;

2. Have distant early warning procedures in place to keep track of and provide extra guidance to students who are most likely to dropout;

3. Provide adult advocates and student support for students most in need;

4. Increase parental engagement and provide individual graduation plans;

5. Encourage rigorous curriculum for graduation for all students, not just those bound for college. The curriculum should be tough enough that graduates are job and college ready when they graduate;

6. Suggest options for struggling students such as ninth-grade academies, alternative schools, or individual instruction plans;

7. Consider raising the compulsory age requirement from 16 to 17 or 18. During the 2009 Montana Legislative Session a bill was introduced to raise the compulsory age to 17, but that bill was defeated;

8. Expand college level learning opportunities at the high school level such as dual enrollment and Advanced Placement (AP) classes;

9. Research and follow best practices; and,

10. Make dropout prevention a national priority.

References

Alliance for Excellent Education, Montana State Card (March 2009). http://www.all4ed.org/about_the_crisis/schools/state_information/montana .

Bridgeland, John. " The Silent Epidemic, Perspectives of High School Dropouts," Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises, LLC, 2006. Also available on line at http://www.silentepidemic.org.

Hammond, Cathy. "Dropout Risk Factors and Exemplary Programs, A Technical Report." Clemson, SC: National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, 2007.

Montana Office of Public Instruction. "Montana Graduate and Dropout Data Collection Handbook,"(p.i), September 2006, http://www.opi.mt.gov/PDF/ADC/FY07/MTHSComDropoutManual.pdf.

"The Silent Epidemic, 10-Point Plan," http://www.silentepidemic.org/solutions/index.htm, 2009 03 24.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (1998). "The Condition of Education 1998," (NCES Publication No. 98–013), by John Wirt, Tom Snyder, Jennifer Sable, Susan Choy, Yupin Bae, Janis Stennett, Allison Gruner, and Marianne Perie. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2005). "Digest of Education Statistics, 2004," (NCES Publication No. 2005-034), by Thomas D. Snyder and Charlene M. Hoffman. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "Understanding Dropout Data," http://dpi.wi.gov/spr/drop_q&a.html, 2009 03 25.

Additional Dropout Resources on the Web

National Center for Education Statistics- http://www.nces.ed.gov/

National Dropout Prevention Center/Network- http://www.dropoutprevention.org/

U. S. Census Bureau- http://www.census.gov/index.html

The Silent Epidemic- http://www.silentepidemic.org/

Alliance for Excellent Education- http://www.all4ed.org/

Appendix

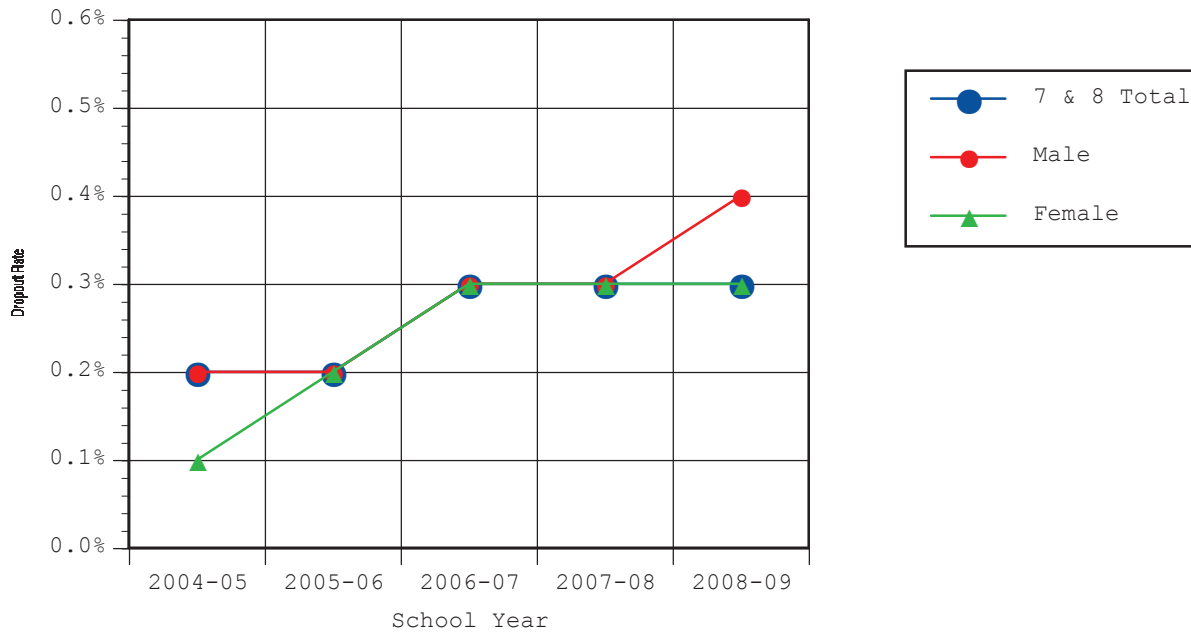## Figure 1: Dropout Rates by Gender for Grades 7-8

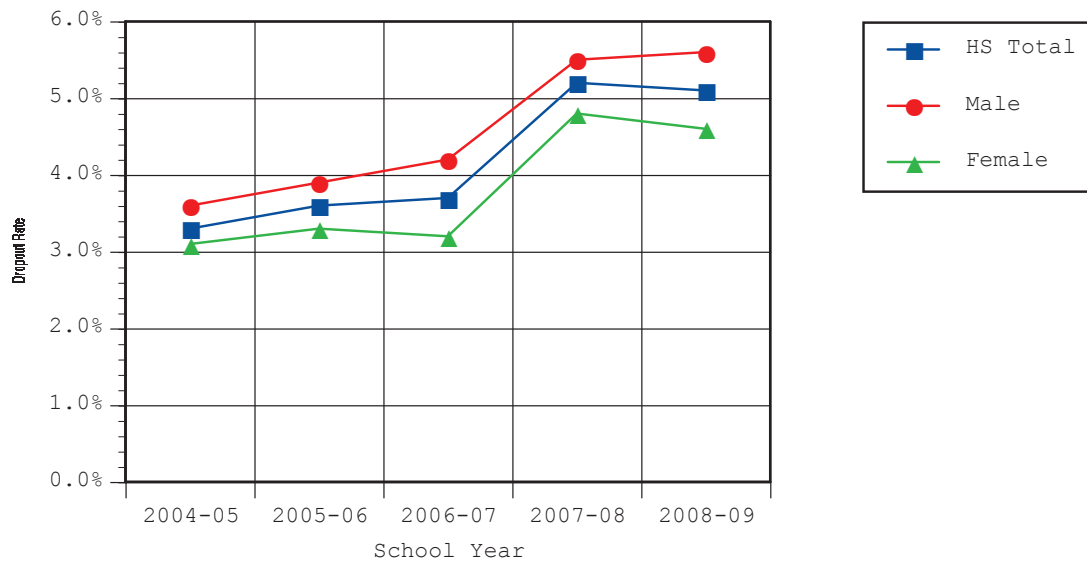## Figure 2: Dropout Rates by Gender Grades 9-12

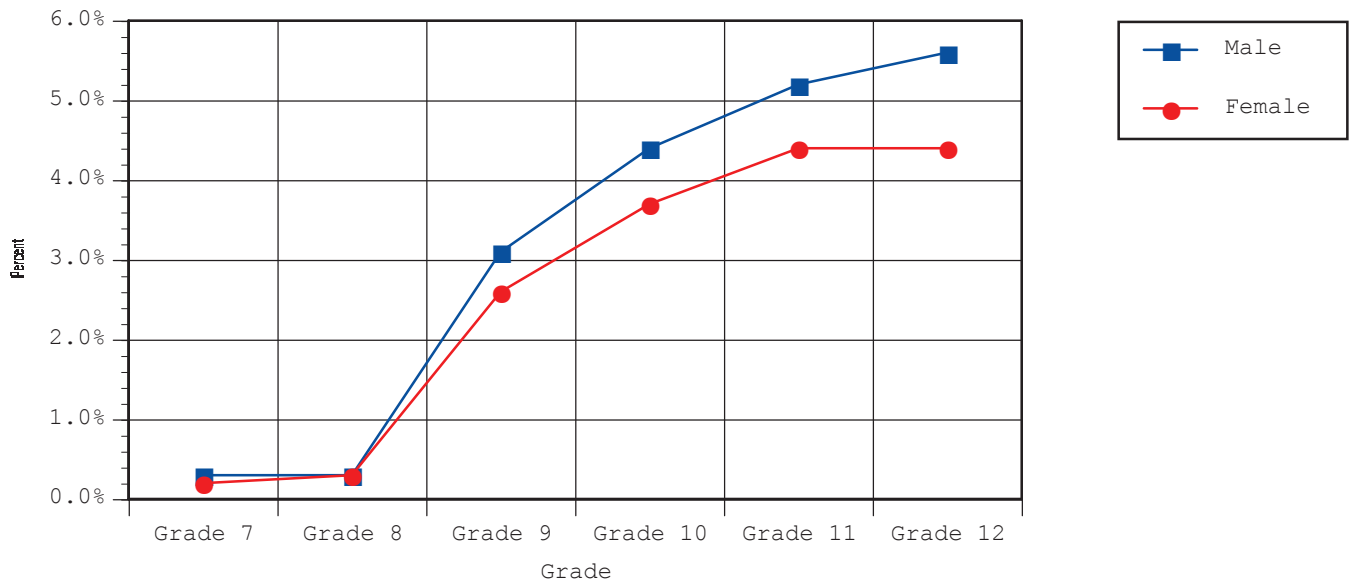## Figure 3: Five Year Dropout Rates by Gender and Grade

Table 1
School Year 2008-09 Montana Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity Categories

	Dropout Rates			Dropout Count			Enrollment		
	Grades 7-8	Grades 9-12	Total	Grades 7-8	Grades 9-12	Total	Grades 7-8	Grades 9-12	Total
American Indian	1.1%	12.7%	8.8%	26	598	624	2,409	4,721	7,130
Asian	0.4%	3.9%	2.7%	1	18	19	238	462	700
Hispanic	0.8%	8.1%	5.5%	5	88	93	596	1,082	1,678
Black	0.0%	7.3%	4.7%	0	27	27	198	371	569
Pacific Islander	0.0%	2.5%	1.7%	0	3	3	55	120	175
White	0.2%	4.1%	2.9%	38	1,619	1,657	18,263	39,485	57,748
Overall	0.3%	5.1%	3.6%	70	2,353	2,423	21,759	46,241	68,000

Figure 4: Dropout Rates for Select Race/Ethnicity Categories for Grades 7-8
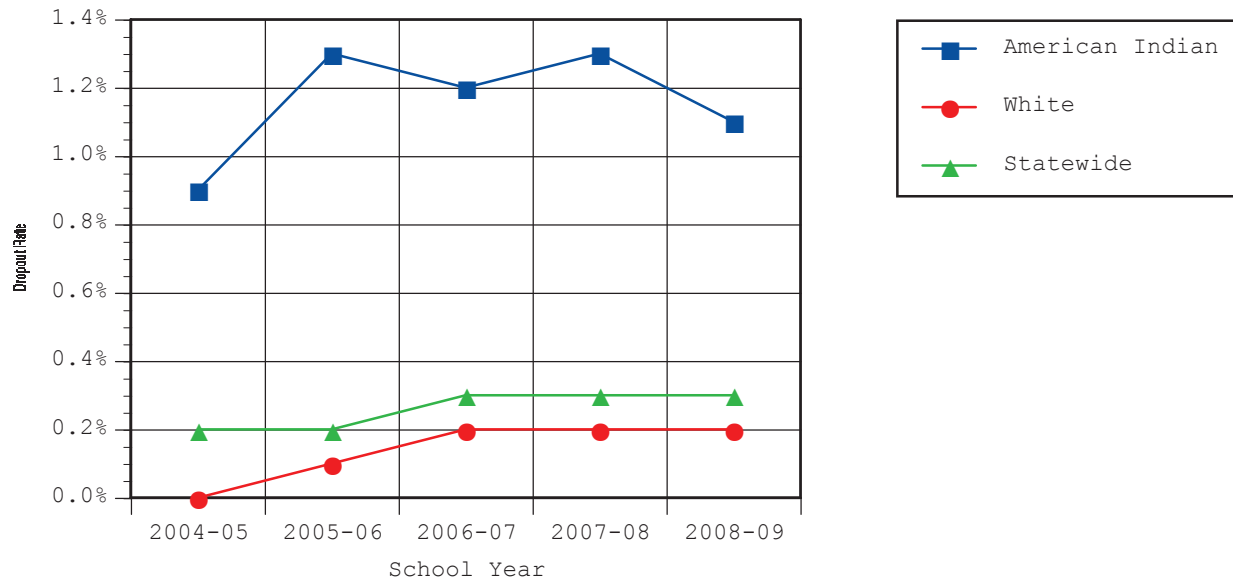

Figure 5: Dropout Rates for Select Race/Ethnicity Categories for Grades 9-12
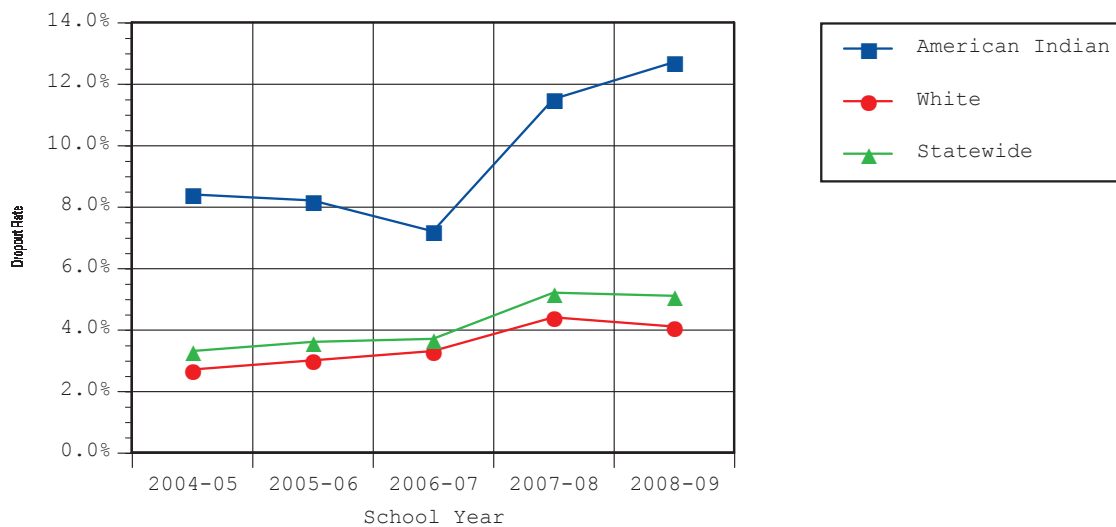
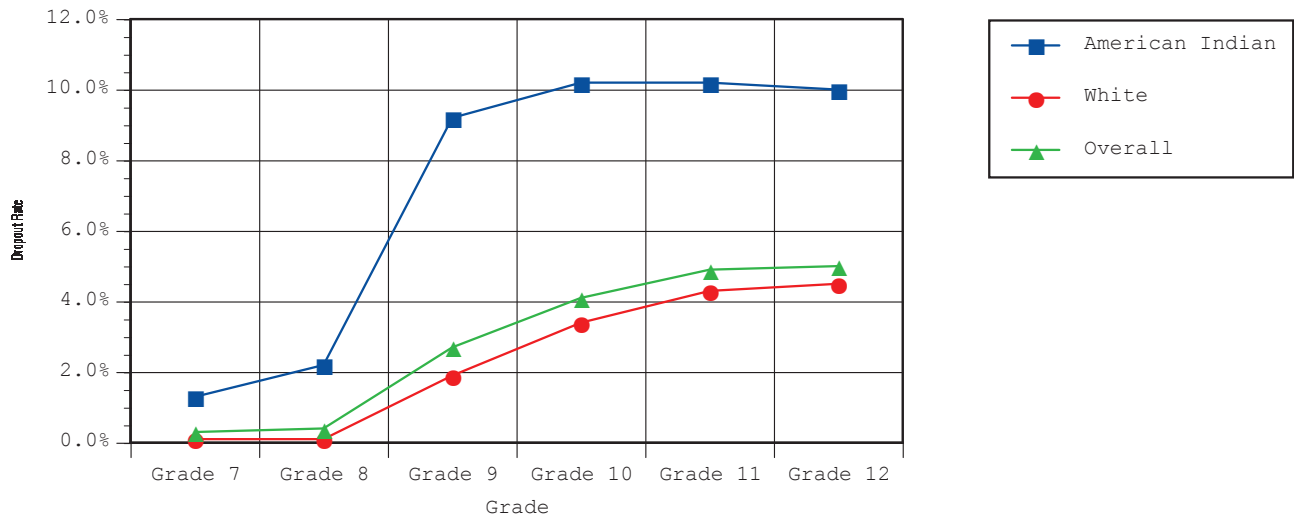Figure 6: Five-Year Dropout Rates by Grade for Select Race Ethnicity Categories

Figure 7: Dropout Rates for Select Race/Ethnicity Categories by Gender Grades 7-8
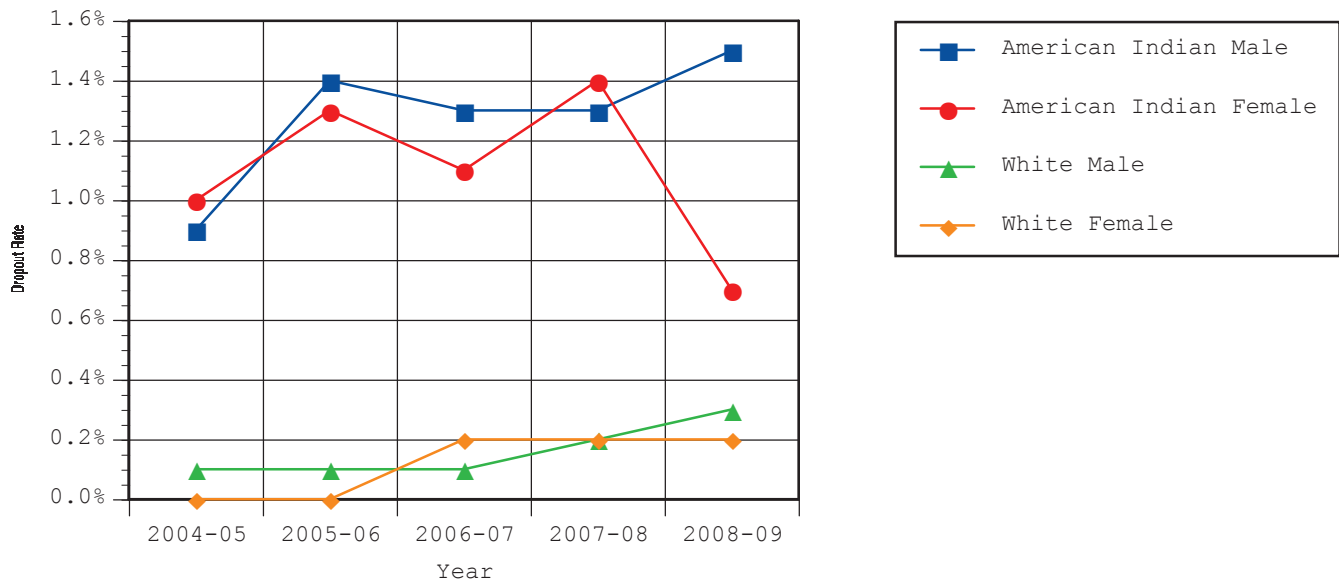
Figure 8: Dropout Rates for Select Race Ethnicity Categories for Gender Grades 9-12
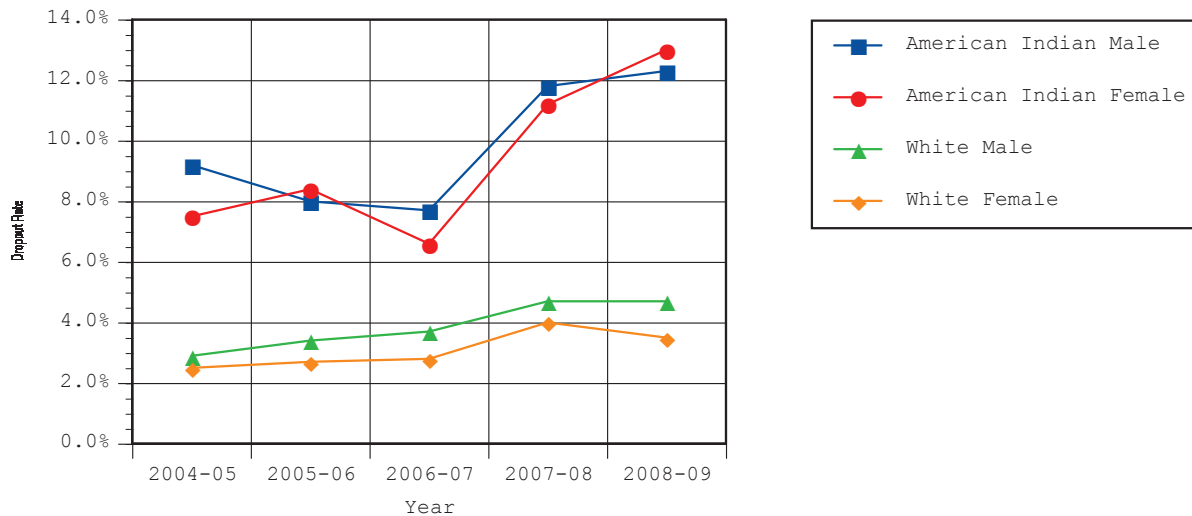

Table 2
Dropout Rate by School District Size and Race

Size Category	Grade Level	American Indian	White	Overall	American Indian Dropout Count	White Dropout Count	Total Dropout Count	American Indian Enrollment	White Enrollment	Total Enrollment	Percent American Indian Enrollment
1E	GR78	0.7%	0.1%	0.2%	19	46	71	2,909	36,418	41,802	7.0%
2E	GR78	0.8%	0.1%	0.3%	32	21	56	3,770	16,032	20,603	18.3%
3E	GR78	2.5%	0.1%	0.5%	59	14	75	2,322	11,017	13,841	16.8%
4E	GR78	1.5%	0.1%	0.3%	29	14	43	1,997	13,807	16,317	12.2%
5E	GR78	0.6%	0.2%	0.2%	5	8	13	828	5,307	6,297	13.1%
6E	GR78	1.5%	0.3%	0.3%	1	3	4	65	1,119	1,213	5.4%
1K	GR78	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	1	5	6	477	7,826	8,649	5.5%
2K	GR78	0.7%	0.1%	0.2%	3	5	8	454	4,280	4,968	9.1%
1H	HS	12.9%	4.1%	4.7%	744	4,083	5,148	5,753	98,675	109,683	5.2%
2H	HS	8.6%	4.1%	4.9%	539	1,481	2,111	6,262	35,708	43,476	14.4%
3H	HS	8.9%	2.6%	3.7%	347	453	816	3,908	17,523	22,250	17.6%
4H	HS	8.9%	1.8%	3.3%	534	383	930	5,999	21,595	28,524	21.0%
5H	HS	5.7%	1.1%	1.9%	63	61	129	1,103	5,666	6,958	15.9%
1K	HS	3.5%	2.9%	2.9%	29	474	520	822	16,456	17,959	4.6%
2K	HS	7.7%	1.8%	2.3%	78	171	258	1,011	9,735	11,205	9.0%

Figure 9: Five Year Dropout Rates by District Size Category for Select Race/Ethnicity
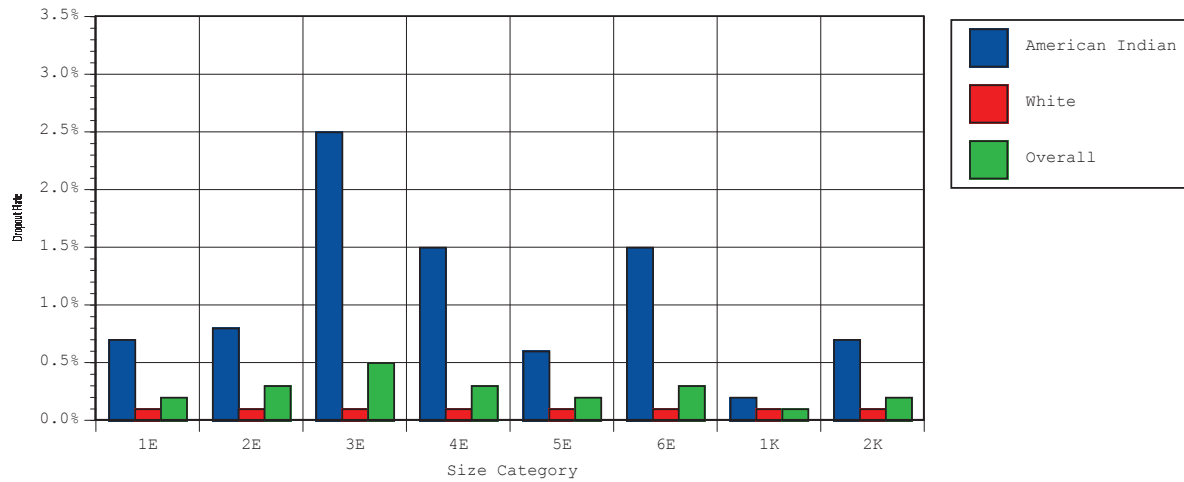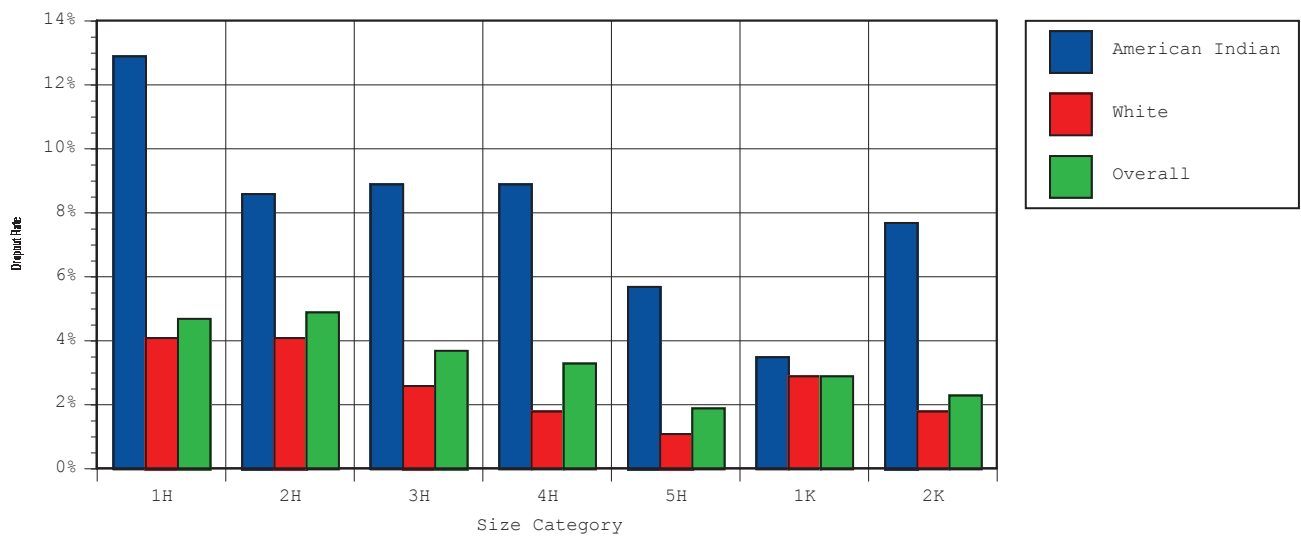Categories for Grades 7-8

Figure 10: Five Year Dropout Rates by District Size Category for Select Race/Ethnicity
Categories for Grades 9-12

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